

Refuting the Argument: Scientific Error in Hadith of Snakes Causing Blindness and Miscarriages

by

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Argument:

We read in Saheeh Bukhari, Vol. 4, Book 54, Hadith 528

Narrated `Aisha:

The Prophet ordered that a short-tailed or mutilated-tailed snake (i.e. Abtar) should be killed, for it blinds the on-looker and causes abortion."

This is silly, how can snakes cause blindness and miscarriages? What kind of pseudo-science is this?

Response:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is speaking about a **specific kind** of mutilated snakes whose attacks may cause blindness and miscarriages; **not all snakes**.¹

This is not pseudo-science. Scientific research shows that there is validity to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) statement.

Regarding the blindness aspect, we read:

They are capable of spitting their venom into the eyes of a victim leading to intense pain in the eyes. This may lead to intense conjunctivitis, corneal erosions, complicated by secondary infection, anterior unweitis **and sometimes blindness**. ("SNAKES AND SNAKE BITES – Part 2: Venoms and Antivenoms", *World Health Organization*, March 2008, pages 2-3, [online source](#))

Regarding the miscarriage aspect we read:

Lifestyle Factors that May Lead to Miscarriage

Some lifestyle factors that could slightly increase the risk of a miscarriage include:

¹ Read <http://en.islamtoday.net/guesshow-152-1886.htm> (Snakes Causing Miscarriage & Blindness)

Use of NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen or naproxen) during conception or early pregnancy

Use of alcohol, cigarettes, cocaine, or other drugs

Heavy caffeine intake

Certain snake bites

Source: <http://www.docshop.com/education/fer...s/miscarriages>

Also:

Unfortunately, among previously documented cases of **snakbite during pregnancy**, the occurrences of **fetal** and maternal **deaths were high** (38% to 43% and 10%, respectively). However, the more recent literature seems to show an improvement in both the maternal and fetal outcomes. With inclusion of most recent case reports, the overall rate of **fetal loss is now around 20%** and... ("**Snakebite During Pregnancy: A Literature Review**", *WILDERNESS & ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE*, 21, 54 – 60 (2010), [online source](#))

So there does indeed appear to be certain snakes whose bites cause blindness and miscarriages. And of course, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) statement does not necessarily imply that **every single snake bite** from these snakes would **always** result in blindness or pregnancy, any more than the statement "Smoking causes lung cancer" entails that every smoker has lung cancer.

So instead of asking why the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) adopted pseudo-science, let us ask how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) knew such information!